

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of *British National Formulary 1981*

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**REFERENCE:** *British National Formulary 1981*, No. 1, British Medical Association and Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London, 1981, 342 pages, index, no price listed.

The *British National Formulary* is compiled by the Joint Formulary Committee, representing the medical and pharmaceutical professions in Great Britain, with the goal of providing practicing physicians and pharmacists with guidance in prescribing drugs.

The book consists of three sections. "Guidance on Prescribing" includes general information on writing prescriptions, prescribing for children and the elderly, and prescribing for patients with liver or kidney disease. It also briefly discusses adverse reactions to drugs, controlled substances (as defined by British laws, of course), and dependence related to the misuse of drugs. The second section provides information on emergency treatment of acute poisoning.

The major section of the book is essentially an abridged, pocket version of the *Physicians Desk Reference*. Drugs are classified into 15 chapters, each relating to a particular system of the human body (gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, respiratory, endocrine, and so on) or a subject such as infections, nutrition, or blood. Indications, cautions, contraindications, side effects, and dosage are given for each drug. There are three appendixes dealing with drug interactions, intravenous administration of drugs, and borderline substances such as dietary products and topical preparations.

Although the *British National Formulary* is British in orientation and primarily designed for prescribers, it could be a useful addition to the libraries of forensic toxicologists or pathologists. Of particular interest would be the table on drug interactions in Appendix 1, as a quick reference in interpreting toxicologic findings in cases of multiple drug levels found in cases where the history indicates liver malfunctions or renal failure.

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